

INTERVIEW WITH MR. ALVIN A. BIRCH
on 6 January 1977 at his home, 12711 Lee-Jackson Highway

SUBJ: Wakefield Chapel Research (E.W. Wakefield)

Interviewer: D'Anne A. Evans

BIRCH: No, what he talked about. The boys were play cowboys and Indians like they do.
EVANS: Yes, what he talked about.
EVANS: Now, as you remember, when I called you on the phone yesterday, Mr. Birch, I was asking if you remember anything about Mr. Elhanan Winchester Wakefield, who was a preacher, down in Annandale really? And I understood from the people at Pender that you had heard Mr. Wakefield and that you did remember him, in fact I understood from Mr. Steadman.

BIRCH: That's right. But I was only a small child then. I don't remember too much about him, but I remember him being there. And coming horseback. I don't remember.

EVANS: He rode in on horseback?

BIRCH: Yes. And he lectured at Pender on the subject of "The Wild West."

EVANS: Did you have a lot of lectures like that? I mean, did you have people coming out or was Mr. Wakefield unusual? Coming out to lecture and talk like that?

BIRCH: I don't get you. The bullet was never taken out, and that caused partial paralysis, and that's why he did. And the only picture we have of him is with his arm in a

EVANS: Well, I mean, he gave a talk at the one-room schoolhouse at Pender; is that right?

BIRCH: Yes. There was a charge for admission. I don't know whether it was for himself or what purpose it was for. But, most likely he did.

EVANS: Do you know how much admission he charged? was a rather small man. Is that correct?

BIRCH: No. Wouldn't have been over a quarter I know.

EVANS: He was about five-nine, so that was about average height, wouldn't you say? That
EVANS: Nobody would have come? And he had long hair, I expect, when you saw him; did he?

BIRCH: That was a lot of money then.

EVANS: Well, I'm not too sure about that.

EVANS: Did you go with your parents?

EVANS: You remember that he carried his arm in a sling, and that he talked about Indians.

BIRCH: Yes. Was the part that interested you?

EVANS: And it was at night? I remember best. I think his subject was "The Wild West."

BIRCH: Yes, at night. That's the only way you could get the farming people in the country out to anything was at night. They couldn't go in the daytime.

EVANS: Right. Oh, of course, they couldn't go in the day. Well, I was wondering, every so often did you have people coming to talk at Pender?

EVANS: Do you remember what part of the West especially?

BIRCH: No.. They did occasionally, but not too often.

BIRCH: Yes.

EVANS: And Mr.. Wakefield then was unusual; I mean it was unusual to have somebody come like that. Would he go around Pender?

BIRCH: Yes, I would say it was unusual.

(short pause on tape, from checking)

EVANS: Now, you described just a little of what you remember about Mr. Wakefield, what he looked like. Could you tell me that again, and have you remembered any more since you talked to me?

BIRCH: I would go by there going to work sometimes.

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BIRCH: No, what impressed me was his talking about the Indians in the West.

EVANS: Yes, what he talked about. Did boys then play cowboys and Indians like they do?

BIRCH: I don't remember that.

EVANS: Didn't have time. Was he talking about the Indians themselves, do you remember, or about fighting them?

BIRCH: Well, there was something the matter with his arm. He carried his arm in a sling most of the time. Whether or not he got that hurt in the West, I don't remember. It kind of impressed me that he did.

EVANS: You especially remember that carrying his arm in a sling?

BIRCH: Course some of the boys around Annandale used to say that when he was home he didn't carry it like that.

EVANS: Well, I understand from his grandson, who had it from his father, that it was his Civil War wound. The bullet was never taken out, and that caused partial paralysis, and that's why he did. And the only picture we have of him is with his arm in a sling, and you see you're the second person who has told me that, so you see I'm very happy you've told us that. We need you to corroborate that that is a picture of Mr. Wakefield I have. Cause we don't have many pictures of him: we only have one, and we hope to have two.

BIRCH: As well as I can remember, I would say he was a rather small man. Is that correct? Do you know?

EVANS: He was about five-nine, so that was about average height, wouldn't you say? That was what his Army records show. And he had long hair, I expect, when you saw him: did he?

BIRCH: Well, I'm not too sure about that.

EVANS: You remember that he carried his arm in a sling, and that he talked about Indians. That was the part that interested you?

BIRCH: That was the part that I remember best. I think his subject was "The Wild West."

EVANS: Did it sound wild the way he told it? He had been there, is that right? He said that he had been there?

BIRCH: That's right.

EVANS: Do you remember what part of the West especially?

BIRCH: No.

EVANS: Did he talk about the Gold Rush?

BIRCH: I couldn't say.

EVANS: Did you by any chance ever go to the Wakefield Chapel that's named for him?

BIRCH: I've been by there. Used to go by there going to work sometimes.

EVANS: Did you ever go to services there?

BIRCH: No.

EVANS: Did Mr. Wakefield ever come to preach at Pender, do you know?

BIRCH: Not that I remember, but there used to be preaching at this schoolhouse before they had the church at Pender, before Pender Church was organized.

EVANS: At the little schoolhouse you've given me the picture of? That you've lent us?

BIRCH: That's right.

EVANS: And he didn't preach there?

BIRCH: I wouldn't say he didn't. He didn't preach there regularly. The preacher from Fairfax, the Methodist preacher from Fairfax, always preached there.

EVANS: Mr. Strother probably.

BIRCH: Strother was the first preacher at the new church when they built down there, in 1907. Smith was the one before Strother. I believe he was the minister when the church was organized. He would have been here about four years before Strother. And Strother came here in 1907 I believe it was. In fact Pender Church was supposed to have been right across the road from the schoolhouse. They dug the foundation and had the rock there for the foundation. But when Strother came here, he said that was no place for a church; it should be down at Pender. So Mr. Robert Graham gave the land for the church down at Pender, and they built it down there. In 1907.

EVANS: In 1907. That's the same time that Ilda Church, out by Wakefield Chapel, was built. It was on Mr. Strother's circuit, too, I know. Do you remember Ilda Church at all?

BIRCH: Who?

EVANS: Ilda?

BIRCH: Yes. Ilda was built at the same time as Pender with the same plan.

EVANS: Right. Oh, the same plan? Who had those plans, let me ask you. Because we're wondering: we don't know who designed the Wakefield Chapel. How did you go about building a church?

BIRCH: I'm not sure. I was too young to know.

EVANS: They would use a set of plans and....?

BIRCH: Ilda Chapel and Pender looked just alike, so I figured it was the same plan. And Strother was the minister who had both of them built.

EVANS: Did you know much about Ilda when you used to go back and forth on the turnpike?

BIRCH: Just passing through there was all I knew.

EVANS: How big a hamlet was it?

BIRCH: There was a store there and a blacksmith's shop.

EVANS: A blacksmith's shop? When was that? What year?

BIRCH: What year was it there? Well, it was there a good many years, from the time Ilda Church was built on....I believe 1940. I'm not sure. They had a blacksmith's shop. I believe there's a school there now and a swimming pool. What is that?

EVANS: I don't know.. At Ilda? Oh. Wakefield Forest School?

BIRCH: No.

EVANS: At Ilda. I'm just trying to think.

(Blacksmith's shop was operated by a colored man named Gibson)

BIRCH: Just past the firehouse. On the left going down. About ~~three or four~~ 300-400 yards east of the firehouse would have been where the blacksmith's shop was. Then past that was Davis' store. Same side of the road. And the Methodist Church was the opposite (Note! The school with the swimming pool would be Christian Commonwealth) side, but further down.

EVANS: Yes. And I understand that church is still there. It's a little house.

BIRCH: It's a dwelling house. But there is a Methodist Church on past that now.

EVANS: Right. St.. Matthew's.

BIRCH: Yes, that's right.

EVANS: Well, you were mentioning to me on the phone that you used to take a special notice of Mr. Wakefield's house when you used to drive cattle that you were taking on the Little River Turnpike to the slaughterhouse? You said you used to drive the cattle down the Little River Turnpike.

BIRCH: In 1909 and 1910. I'm not sure about 1908. I used to drive cattle for a man who was a drover; he got so much a head for driving cattle to market. If people didn't drive them over the road, they had to drive them to a railroad station and ship them and then probably have to drive them still to the slaughterhouse. So I've driven them from as far away as Dover which is a mile west of Aldie.

EVANS: Did the drover come here then from the Shenandoah?

BIRCH: He lived down here.

EVANS: Oh, he lived here in Pender.

BIRCH: The people up in the country paid him so much a head to drive them to the slaughterhouse.

EVANS: And you helped him. Let's see you were....if you were born in 189...

BIRCH: I was 14, 15 and 16 in 1908, 09 and 10.

EVANS: That was your first job as it were, outside your family?

BIRCH: Yes, I think so. Other than thinning corn. Boys ten, twelve years old could thin corn.

EVANS: Oh, I'm sure!

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BIRCH: First corn I ever thinned, and the cheapest I ever thinned for, was fifty cents a day, from sunup to sundown.

EVANS: Fifty cents a day!

BIRCH: And after that we got seventy-five cents.

EVANS: Probably went a long way in those days.

BIRCH: And driving cattle I got seventy-five cents and my dinner.

EVANS: A day. Seventy-five cents a day! Well, that probably bought a fair amount, didn't it?

BIRCH: Oh, that would go almost as far now as what you get nowadays.

EVANS: You said that you took the cattle down the Little River Turnpike and you went past Mr. Wakefield's house, when you were doing that.

BIRCH: That's right. We'd drive the cattle from up around Aldie, just over the hill here, from where the drover lived; and his name was Hamilton Gibson. We'd spend the night there, and the next day we'd go to Bailey's Crossroads: go to Annandale and down Columbia Pike to Bailey's Crossroads. And we left the cattle there at Payne's field, ~~near~~ Luke Payne. (He had a store at the crossroads and a farm behind that, where cattle could be left.)

EVANS: Yes. And that was what? You said about sixteen miles a day.

BIRCH: Sixteen miles each way. And the next morning we'd take them into the drove yard in the slaughterhouse.

EVANS: And that was what, down near the Pentagon?

BIRCH: That was up near where Hoover Airport used to be. You don't remember it, but it was up, further up than the Pentagon. It was on this side of the River.

EVANS: Now then you say that you passed Mr. Wakefield's house when you went through Annandale.

BIRCH: I knew where everybody lived then. We learned to know where people lived, and you always found out where the good drinking water was.

EVANS: Oh, there was a difference? You mean somebody had a better well than somebody else?

BIRCH: Convenient place to get it and good water. The ~~Sidewater~~ ^{Broad} place (formerly in Fairfax City) was one place we'd drink. Another one was the spring going up the hill at Barcroft, just across from Barcroft Dam. There was a spring right on the side of the road. I believe a family by the name of Tillets lived there on the right.

EVANS: The big old white farmhouse you see on Columbia Pike?

BIRCH: It was on Columbia Pike, and it would be the first house across Holmes Run, which is Lake Barcroft. On the right going down. I don't know whether it's still there or not.

EVANS: There's a big white farmhouse; I don't know if it's the one. Now, speaking of knowing all the people along the way, did you know the Besleys' who lived on Wakefield Chapel Road?

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BIRCH: They lived back off of the Little River Turnpike.

EVANS: That's right.

BIRCH: I didn't know too much back there.

EVANS: Oh. You didn't.

BIRCH: I knew of them, but I didn't know them.

EVANS: Well, then let me ask you something more about the Turnpike itself. What kind of a surface was on that road?

BIRCH: Broken rock. That was the center part. And they weren't broken by machine, they were broken by hand.. And in the summertime, the center part was broken rock, and there was a side road on each side of that, a dirt road, that people used in the summertime. In the wintertime, you had to use the rock part.

EVANS: Was it ever closed?

BIRCH: Closed? Not that I know.

EVANS: It was open all year round in other words?

BIRCH: In fact, a snowstorm didn't stop them from using the road then. No, that's right: they packed the snow down and used bobsleds. They didn't scrape it off. Most farmers had bobsleds. Put the wagonbed on that and use that. And they had sleighs with sleighbells on. You don't hear that anymore because they scrape the snow off the road, the first thing they do now. If you just pack it down, it stayed on the road for a long time, sometimes all winter.

EVANS: You know when I was reading the Maryland Conference Minutes of the Methodist Protestant (Church), which is what Wakefield Chapel was, a really interesting newspaper; and the minister was writing from Vale, saying that the schools were closed for the winter. That was about 1896. Now it sounds as though, when you were a boy, they didn't close the schools for the winter.

BIRCH: Not that I know of. I started in 1900. I think I started probably my sixth birthday: you had to be six years old to go to school, and I probably only went two or three months in 1900, that part. Then I started the next fall. But I don't remember school being closed at all on account of weather. It could have been a day or so, but I don't remember..

EVANS: But not for a period of months. Not from January to March?

BIRCH: I remember it being so bad ~~my father it being so bad~~ my Father would take me to school on a horse, horseback.

EVANS: Well, you lived just down the road. Did all the children manage to get to school?

BIRCH: I don't know whether they all did or not. The ones that were near there got there.

EVANS: Then the Turnpike was not closed. That's interesting, because when it was first built, it was closed part of the year.

BIRCH: It got its name from the Little River at Aldie. The Little River crosses there at Aldie. That's the only river that empties into a creek that I know of. It empties into Goose Creek.

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BIRCH: I don't know how far that name went. (Little River Turnpike) Did it go to Winchester?

EVANS: No. The part that was called the Little River Turnpike was just Aldie to Alexandria.

BIRCH: I didn't know whether its name stopped at Aldie or not. Now, another turnpike over here, 29-211, that was the Warrenton Turnpike. That went from Warrenton to what's now Kamp Washington. And then there was another one that went from Leesburg to Alexandria; that was Route 7. Is now Route 7. There was another one from Dranesville to Georgetown; that was the Georgetown Turnpike.

EVANS: Now, when you were a boy, did they still have the tollgates on the Turnpike?

BIRCH: Not here. I've seen a tollgate on Route 7.

EVANS: Oh, really? When you were a boy, they still paid tolls on Route 7?

BIRCH: When I was (unclear) I saw one on Route 7.

EVANS: Then the state must have maintained this road.

BIRCH: I imagine so. Wakefield, one of Mr. Wakefield's sons, who lived down to Annandale, said he remembered seeing 5,000 turkeys coming down the Turnpike.

EVANS: Did your Dad ever go out and clear out his section of the road, for instance if it snowed?

BIRCH: My father used to do some road work in the summertime. They had Road Commissioners then. The Road Commission would give him certain sections of the road, to pick up the loose rock, open the ditches, fix the culverts and things like that.

EVANS: Well, then as far as you know, was that a civic duty or was he paid for it?

BIRCH: He got paid for it. There was a commissioner in each district, a road commissioner.

EVANS: Do you remember hearing your father talk about that? I walked back up to where the Beltway crosses the Little River Turnpike now, looking for them. I couldn't find

BIRCH: I remember helping him pick up the rock. smaller herd of sheep; and he picked up the two that I lost, and the drover got them back. I was very lucky.

EVANS: What did you do with it? Did you put it back?

BIRCH: Oh, yes, we took the loose rock and put it where there were any bad places in the road.

EVANS: It took so much loose rock. I'd have probably found them. The sheep, when they see the shade after they get hot, they kick up a lot of dust

EVANS: What do you think, Mr. Birch, would be the most different thing about the living now as opposed to the way things were when you were first growing up here?

BIRCH: The thing that's most different? got to Annandale and courted and only had ninety-

EVANS: Yes, the thing that was what you like most and what you like least.

BIRCH: Transportation, I guess. You see, in 1900, the people were getting rid of most of their oxen around here. I remember a few yoke of oxen. I remember my grandfather having a yoke of oxen. I remember the neighbors having some. But then, along about 1900, they started getting rid of them, or had gotten rid of them. There were very few left. After that they used horses entirely.

EVANS: Why did they particularly have oxen as opposed to horses? Were they tougher or longer lived or....?

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- BIRCH: I don't know.
- EVANS: So horses sort of came in when you were growing up. Now, on the Turnpike, you mentioned cattle. Now weren't cattle kind of hard on the Turnpike? They'd take animals over the Turnpike; you know that's kind of hard on the road, isn't it?
- BIRCH: They'd drive them. They'd drive them over the road, cattle and sheep, too. In fact they used to drive turkeys and hogs. I never helped drive any of those. I always said a hog's head was on the wrong end, so I never had anything to do with them. I've heard about the turkeys. Every time you drive a turkey after sundown, he'll go up in the first tree he comes to. But I've seen them driven over the road. I don't know who drove them or how far.
- EVANS: Did they use dogs for turkeys I wonder?
- BIRCH: I don't recall any dogs.
- EVANS: Just people? Just yelling at them?
- BIRCH: That's right.
- EVANS: Because Mr. Wakefield, one of Mr. Wakefield's sons, who lived down in Annandale, said he remembered seeing 5,000 turkeys coming down the Turnpike..
- BIRCH: I don't doubt that.
- EVANS: That must have been a sight!
- BIRCH: I told you I helped drive cattle; I also helped drive sheep. At the age of sixteen I drove 94 (ninety-four) sheep from here to Annandale. When we got to Annandale the sheep all laid down in the shade; and the drover went on to Bailey's Crossroads with cattle. He was supposed to come back to Annandale to meet me and drive the sheep on, and I was to take the horse and buggy back home. So when I got to Annandale and the sheep all laid down, I could count them. I counted and I only had ninety-two. There were supposed to be ninety-four. I walked back up to where the Beltway crosses the Little River Turnpike now, looking for them. I couldn't find them. But another man came along with a smaller herd of sheep; and he picked up the two that I lost, and the drover got them back. I was very lucky.
- EVANS: That's wonderful, because...
- BIRCH: What happened...if I'd have gone half-a-mile further, I'd have probably found them. The sheep, when they see the shade after they get hot, they kick up a lot of dust and run to it and lie down. They went off by the side of the road in the honeysuckle and laid down; I had to carry some of them out in my arms. And evidently I didn't get them all.. You can imagine how I felt at age sixteen with the responsibility of ninety-four sheep! And then I got to Annandale and counted and only had ninety-two.
- EVANS: And you'd probably have had to pay for the two..
- BIRCH: No, I wouldn't have had to pay for them. The drover would probably have been responsible for them.
- EVANS: Well, now was that the same man? Were there lots of people who made a living by being drovers?

BIRCH: There were several, especially one in Centreville that I knew; he was the one that came along and picked up the two sheep. His name was Jeff Rector. And then there was an old Irishman that used to drive cattle over the road all the time. His name was Pat Driscoll. He was from up in _____ somewhere. He used to stay right across the road from here, overnight.

EVANS: You know, that reminds me, there used to be a stagecoach that came down this road sometimes, didn't there?

BIRCH: Now, I've read a history of the Battle of Pender, which is all mixed up. I don't know who wrote it. They've got the names spelled wrong. The Millan family, which lived over here where the Fairfax County Dump is now, their name was M-i-l-l-a-n. He spelled it M-i-l-a-n. And the old Ballard Reed place, where the Battle of Ox Hill or Chantilly was fought, they spelled that R-e-i-d, he spelled it, and I'm pretty sure it was R-e-e-d. The back of my place joins that place, and on my gate I think it's R-e-e-d. They lived there then. And he said Chantilly, during the Civil War, was above where Stringfellow Road comes out up here on the Little River Turnpike.. That was Chantilly Farm, but there wasn't any Chantilly there. My grandparents were living at that time, and they didn't know anything about it. But this side of there, there's a stone house up there at the International Golf Course: they claim that was Flatlick Post Office at one time. During stagecoach days, I don't know how far back that went. That could have been that that was the Post Office during the Civil War, but I wouldn't say it was.

EVANS: I've seen....the County has a record on that old house.

BIRCH: Chantilly has moved. Down where Downs' Store is, the first store this way, that was old Chantilly. That's where the old Post Office was that I remember. And now it's up at the crossroads where the light is, that's Chantilly. Where the firehouse is, did you notice?

EVANS: Yes. That's Chantilly now?

BIRCH: That's Chantilly. And then there was a place that they called West End, that was a quarter of a mile past that, before you get to Dulles Airport Road. That was called West End, and there was quite a place there. There were stores, a blacksmith's shop and a barroom. I don't remember the barroom, but the bartender is buried there in the Church Cemetery at Chantilly. His name was Bene Utterback..

EVANS: Oh, Utterback. That's a familiar name around here. I've seen that in the old directories.

BIRCH: There are Utterbacks' in Centreville. My mother's sister married an Utterback.

EVANS: Well, now when you mentioned, you said the drover used to stay across the road, when you did that kind of driving you had to have someplace to stay.

BIRCH: Had to have someplace to stay for the cattle, so that they could have water and something to eat.

EVANS: Right. So did they have arrangements with farmers along the way, so that they'd keep the cattle, and then they'd (drovers) stay at the house, too?

BIRCH: Have a special place to stay, yeah.

EVANS: They'd have some sort of a standing arrangement, wouldn't they? I mean you couldn't just stop....

BIRCH: Well, you couldn't stop anywhere. It had to be a special place.

EVANS: They knew the farmers and which ones would be willing to allow them to stay?

BIRCH: Yeah. That was all arranged ahead of time.

EVANS: I wondered. I wondered whether they didn't have special stopping places, because you, when you helped, said you always went to a certain place for the night.

BIRCH: That's right.

EVANS: And the drover payed a certain amount to the person who allowed the...?

BIRCH: I imagine he did. I wouldn't know about that.

EVANS: Well, then you were in the business of farming, general farming, you said, up until 1926. Now, did you just get tired of farming at that time or did you....?

BIRCH: Well, I built this house, and I was working as a carpenter's helper on it. From then on I worked regularly as a carpenter. I did some carpentry work before that, but not much.

EVANS: But this was really what you liked to do, is that it?

BIRCH: Yes, that's really what I longed to do. But I spent forty-five years at it..

EVANS: Marvelous. Were you building this for yourself then?

BIRCH: That's right.

EVANS: For yourself and your wife?

BIRCH: I bought this land here, fifty-one acres, in 1919 for one thousand dollars. And I knew at the time I bought it that I could get six-hundred dollars for the timber. That's why I bought it. I built the house here in 1924 and moved here January first, 1925. I've been here ever since.

EVANS: Youve watched it grow up around, haven't you? Watched the whole area grow..And yet you're far enough off the road so it hasn't overrun you, when they widened the highway.

END OF SIDE ONE

on my place

BIRCH: During the Civil War, they were building a railroad from Alexandria, and I don't know how far it was going, but it was coming up through here. It goes through the town of Fairfax and goes across my place here. There's no sign of it, but it crosses here, crosses Greenbrier, and Poplar Tree Road, from Stringfellow Road west a quarter of a mile, is the old railroad bed.

EVANS: Now how do you know that it crosses your land? There's not the embankment part left?

BIRCH: Yes, the embankments are left. The grade of the road now is ^{what was} the railroad bed. Back here, right at the back end of my woods, there's cuts and fills that far, pretty much from there on to Alexandria. It goes through the town of Fairfax, goes right back of the Fairfax Cemetery, and it's pretty well graded, here and there, all the way on. As far up as I know, is the railroad bridge abutments built across Cub Run. ^{Big} Red stone abutments; they're beautiful. I don't know

whether anybody's hauled them away or not. I haven't seen them for about 30 years. But they were there.

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BIRCH: And then somewhere here it branched off; part of it went from Chantilly to Herndon it crosses the road to the right:

EVANS: Yes, that was just before the Civil War, and the Civil War stopped them building it.

BIRCH: They ran out of money, and the Civil War at the same time stopped them.

EVANS: Does it show on your deed, too....that right-of-way that the railroad had?

BIRCH: No, my deed doesn't mention it, but some places do. I was working in the field one day and two surveyors came by. They were tracing the old railroad bed... came right across where I was working.

EVANS: When did they widen the Little River Turnpike?

BIRCH: Well, when they blacktopped it was 1921, '22, and '23. And it's been a dual highway; I don't know how long that's been now. I lose track of it. Not more, I don't believe, not more than ten years. That did away with Pender..took five houses, two stores and a blacksmith's shop..

EVANS: Oh, you mean there really was something at Pender besides the church?. That's why that crossroads was called that.

BIRCH: The old Stewart house down here; they moved that. That's across the road from the new Pender Church. That was where they took General Philip Kearney, when he was killed in the Battle of Ox Hill.. Took him to the old Stewart house. Took his body there.

EVANS: That's been moved across the road, is that it?

BIRCH: That's been moved across the road and two hundred yards this side..When they took Kearney to the Stewart house, Stonewall Jackson went to view his body and cried when he saw him. They had been Civil War soldiers together in the Mexican War; and when the Civil War broke out, Jackson resigned from the United States Army and went in the Confederacy, and Kearney stayed in the Union Army. I'm one of the few people around here who have seen Mosby.

EVANS: No! When did you see Mosby?

BIRCH: I saw Mosby at Herndon in 1912. I think he died in 1914; I'm not sure, but I think it was '14 or '15.

EVANS: What was he doing at Herndon?

BIRCH: They were having a big picnic or something out there at Darlington's Grove, and he was the head of a group that marched from the railroad station down to this Grove. I'm not sure what group it was, whether they were Civil War veterans or not. But he was the head of this group, and I remember seeing him. I remember he was rather a small man and had a little mustache.

EVANS: Did he make a speech or anything down there?

BIRCH: He probably did down there, but I saw him on this march from the station down there.

EVANS: And in 1912 you were just a boy then, just a youngster.

BIRCH: I was eighteen years old. I'm always six years older than the year is..

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EVANS: Yes, I know that method of....I use that method with my parents. And he impressed you as a small man. What else about him do you particularly remember?

BIRCH: There were lots of Civil War veterans around then, and just didn't pay much attention to them. I used to go with my parents down to Fairfax to June Day they called it. The Confederate Veterans used to celebrate their Memorial Day on "June Day", the first day of June. I remember going down and my grandfather used to march from the Courthouse down to the Cemetery with the rest of the Confederates, Grandfather Lee.

EVANS: And what was it? They had a picnic and..did they ever re-enact....you know when I first came to Falls Church, they used to re-enact what they called "Mosby Day"; and they'd restage the capture of the general by Mosby.

BIRCH: There's a lot of Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery at Fairfax. As you go in the driveway there's a big monument that stands there; you make a circle around it, the Confederate monument. There's lots of soldiers buried around there; and they used to go there and have the celebration.

EVANS: What do you especially remember about Fairfax Courthouse in those days then? Was that where you mainly went shopping?

BIRCH: Yes, at the old Courthouse. It's still standing.

EVANS: Yes. Did your life center around the church or the school or a town when you were growing up here, Mr. Birch?

BIRCH: Well, in this ~~town~~ ^{community} here the schoolhouse was the community center to begin with, and after the church was built, it was the church.

EVANS: Did they have, what kind of things? Did they have ice cream socials?

BIRCH: We always had them in the summertime. And they had, Box Suppers we called them. The women and girls would take their boxes; and the men would pile the boxes and eat with whosever box they got.

EVANS: Oh, isn't that fun! I've read about that, but I'd forgotten. That was the wintertime thing. The summer was the ice cream social, and the winter was Box Suppers.

BIRCH: They'd have Oyster Suppers, too, in the wintertime.

EVANS: Oysters?

BIRCH: In the wintertime..

EVANS: Did they bring the oysters up from the Chesapeake Bay then?

BIRCH: Yes. You could get them in Washington or Alexandria.

EVANS: Well, then at the church did you have town meeting sort of things; if you had to decide about some political sort of thing?

BIRCH: Sometimes there'd be speeches made.

EVANS: That would be in the church?

BIRCH: I'm not sure about the church, but in the schoolhouse they used to have them.

EVANS: And, you know, what they say about the Wakefield Chapel: Mrs. Vozzolo was saying that people did not get married in church so much in those days as they got married...that is the minister went to the home. Was that your experience?

BIRCH: The ministers used to come out and visit all the members of the church in their homes.

EVANS: But did they marry people at home? Or did it matter?

BIRCH: I imagine it did sometimes. I remember some people were married at home. Most of us at church I think.

EVANS: Is there anything else that you especially remember? That you think is important about your early days, which aren't all that early in Virginia time.

BIRCH: Greenbrier Subdivision is one thing I remember, when that was all farms, what used to be five farms. No, twelve farms. It was four individual farms at one time.

EVANS: What kind of farming did people do mostly out here? Was it dairy farming?

BIRCH: No, grain and livestock. Dairy farming didn't come here until they got trucks to haul the milk. People either used to live close to a railroad, to dairy farm, or live within driving distance of the market with horses. Now the farthest out that there was a dairy farm that hauled the milk all the way to Washington was down here this side of Fairfax, about two miles this side of Fairfax. There was a farm there, and I've been told that they hauled their milk to Washington. And after they got trucks, trucks picked it up. And that let the dairy farmers get farther out; and there were dairy farms all around here, and before Greenbrier was built, that was a big dairy farm. Dr. Huddleston was that one. But to begin with, it was just livestock and grain.

EVANS: Until the transportation made it possible..

BIRCH: I think transportation has changed this country every so often. Like when the little electric railroad used to run into Fairfax. Everybody that wanted to build a house, built it along that railroad so they could get a way to get into Washington. And they used it. But then the automobiles got so plentiful that they stopped using that railroad and put the railroad out of business. Now they wish they had it back. It's the same with Great Falls. What's now Old Dominion Drive was the Old Dominion Railroad that went up to Great Falls, and there were thousands of people that went up there every weekend to Great Falls. They had an amusement park, merry-go-round, and a dance hall and a hotel and all that stuff. That attracted the people, and especially the people from Washington used to go up there. And automobiles got so plentiful they had to do away with the railroad.

EVANS: When did you first get an automobile?

BIRCH: I bought a 1916 automobile, but I bought it second-hand. I bought it in 1920.

EVANS: Was it a Ford?

BIRCH: Ford, yes. Model-T.. Then after that I bought a truck, a Ford truck.

EVANS: Did that make a big difference then for you in how easy it was to get places, get things places?

BIRCH: Yes. Quite a bit of difference.

EVANS: Mr. Birch, I really thank you for letting me come and for donating your time to this interview.

Interview with Mr. Alvin A. Birch 1/6/77 - Wakefield Chapel Research

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pp 4 & 5 corrected re Mr Birch 3/1/77 DLE

I, Alvin A. Birch, do hereby give and grant to
the Fairfax County, Virginia, Public Library, Virginiana Collection, as
a donation to the 1976 Oral History Project, the tape recordings listed
below and I authorize the Virginiana Collection to use said recordings
or the summaries or transcripts thereof in such manner as they in their
sole discretion may determine, pursuant to the educational and historical
objectives of the Oral History Project.

6 January 1977

Date of Agreement

Alvin A. Birch

Signature

Oral History Project

by Anne P. Lane

Interviewer

Subject of Tape Recordings: E.W. Wakefield lecturing at Pender, Pender
Community and area, livestock drivers on Little River Turnpike

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6 January 1977

Date of Agreement

Alvin A. Birch

Signature

Oral History Project

by

Diane A. Evans

Interviewer

Subject of Tape Recordings: E.W. Wakefield lecturing at Pender, Pender Community and area, livestock drivers on Little River Turnpike

COUNTY OF FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA
Office of Comprehensive Planning (History Branch)
ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name Alvin Ashton Birch Birthdate Feb. 20, 1894

Address 12711 Lee-Jackson Highway, Fairfax, Virginia

Years Which you resided in Fairfax Co. 83

Area or areas of residence adjoining property, 26 yrs: 3 yrs next door: 51 yrs present ad.

Aspects of life and/or Historic Landmarks about which you have the most knowledge: e.g.,
rural living on Wakefield Chapel Road; the business community of Falls Church; Sully
Plantation; newspaper publishing; church activities, etc.
farmed until 1926 - cows, hogs, chickens.

carpenter - helped build houses for A.R. Sherwood and Phoenix Properties; worked on
additions at Mt. Vernon, Rhick and Presbyterian Meeting House

Considerable knowledge of history of Pender-Fairfax area

Occupation: (if retired, list former business or profession) retired- see above

Education: High school attended: Fairfax (2-year highschool)-drove horse and buggy

Elementary school Pender

College: none

Family History:

Place of Birth: within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of present dwelling

Mother's Name (include Maiden Name) Mary Ellen "Mittie" Lee

Father's Name Edwin Lee Birch

(It would be helpful if you could give parents' birthdates as well).

If your family are long-time residents of Fairfax County, can you tell us (even if approximately) when they first arrived, where they came from and where they lived here:

father born in Chantilly, also grandmother born on what was part of Sully

Subject of Oral History Interview: Wakefield Chapel Research: E.W. Wakefield

Other Subjects on which you would be willing to contribute information: history of Pender area and Methodist Church

INTERVIEWER D. Anne A. Evans Date 1/6/77